



By Chuck Bell

Contributed Content

September 15, 2015 11:04AM

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County should simply allow hauled water

To San Bernardino County Supervisors James Ramos, Robert Lovingood, Curt Hagman, staff and the clerk of the Board: Following is the Sept.

15 Board agenda re: water hauling: Direct the County Administrative Office to develop, within 30 days, an estimate of cost and time required to study the use of hauled water as the primary source of water for new individual single family residential construction in County unincorporated areas not served by water purveyors. (Presenter: James Ramos, Chairman and Third District Supervisor) When we were verbally informed of this meeting a week or so ago, we assumed the item would be under 'discussion' and were prepared to attend via Joshua Tree and/or Hesperia offices. However, since it is under the "consent" calendar, we submit our comments in writing as follows (per "Public Comment" notes listed at the end of the Board agenda): While we appreciate the County finally doing something after over six years of this issue being front and center in our desert communities, we see no need for taxpayers having to pay the costs of "develop(ing)....

an estimate of cost and time required to study the use of hauled water as the primary source...' This action just sets in motion a long-term, unnecessary, bureaucratic process that would be a prelude to the actual "study" — whatever that means or entails — which is also unnecessary for the following reasons: State Department of Public Health may 'not like' water hauling, but it doesn't prohibit it.

In fact, it regulates it under the Sherman Act as an acceptable source.

The County's current prohibition of hauled water to new development is not embodied in an ordinance — nor in the Development Code — but from what we understand exists only internally within the County Department of Environmental Health Services and (is) so stated in a letter to us.

If the County's objective is to assure good quality water to residences, hauled water normally is of significantly better quality than the groundwater within the primary areas of concern, per empirical evidence mapped and available for many years.

To avoid the useless, expensive and unproductive pursuit of what the County would consider criteria or parameters for approving/denying hauled water to new residences — an unnecessary and cumbersome process for both staff and property owners — here is what we have proposed for many years, over and over again, solving your so-called problem: Hauled water is allowed for residential development not served by a centralized water system, from a legal/ licensed source and from a legal/licensed hauler.

— Chuck Bell is president of the Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association (LVEDA).

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20150915/OPINION/150919817>

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By Staff Reports

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September 15, 2015 12:01AM

Supervisors work to address water hauling

SAN BERNARDINO — The County Board of Supervisors has directed the County Administrative Office to develop, within 30 days, an estimated cost and time to study the use of hauled water in unincorporated areas, the county announced Tuesday.

Hauled water is the physical transport of drinking water by a vehicle having a permanent mounted or detachable tank from a water source to a residential or commercial establishment for the purpose of consumption.

The county requires that new construction in unincorporated areas be served by an existing public or private water purveyor, if available, or by water well.

The use of hauled water as the primary source of potable water has been prohibited since 2007. However, residents have argued that drilling a water well is an ineffective and a costly expense. Visit cob-sire.sbcounty.gov/sirepub for more information.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20150915/NEWS/150919800>

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SanBAG gives updates on cost, timeline of Redlands rail project

By Sandra Emerson, Redlands Daily Facts

RedlandsDailyFacts.com

San Bernardino Associated Governments shared the updated project cost and timeline for the Redlands Passenger Rail Project on Tuesday during the first Rail to Redlands Working Group meeting in over a year.

The project, which will extend passenger rail service 9 miles from San Bernardino to Redlands, is expected to be complete and operating in 2020 at an estimated cost of \$246 million to \$250 million, according to SanBAG, the county's transportation planning authority, which is the lead agency on the project.

The costs include local, state and federal funding, which will cover the entire scope of the project from planning through construction but not the cost for the rail service nor interest owed on bonds being issued to help pay for the project.

The project's costs increased from \$242 million due to projected costs for vehicles and upgrades to the vehicle maintenance facility in San Bernardino.

SanBAG had originally estimated the cost for vehicles to be \$16 million, before deciding on the use of Diesel Multiple Units over Metrolink locomotives, Carrie Schindler, director of transit and rail programs for SanBAG, said Tuesday. The projected cost for vehicles has been increased to an estimated \$18 million to \$22 million.

"We will obviously know more as we get further along in the design and have a better construction cost estimate," said Schindler.

The first phase of the construction includes placement of 9 miles of single track with 2 miles of double track in the middle to allow vehicles to pass each other.

There are four stations planned: Waterman Avenue; New York Street near Esri, at the company's expense; downtown Redlands; and the University of Redlands.

There will be four bridge rehabilitations and 26 at-grade crossings.

A separate construction contract will be issued to remove older utilities before construction of the rail begins, Schindler said.

The cities of Redlands and San Bernardino have agreed to implement quiet zones along the rail corridor in order to minimize the sound of train horns.

SanBAG is looking into minimizing impacts on flood control facilities, such as the Mission Zanja, and recommending the implementation of Metrolink's Positive Train Control system, she said.

Two Metrolink express trains were environmentally cleared to run in the morning and

evening, so a hybrid platform will be installed in downtown to accommodate both vehicles, she said.

However, SanBAG is proposing the use of Diesel Multiple Units.

"They're cleaner, quieter and cheaper to operate than a standard Metrolink-type vehicles, so it's very applicable to this type of situation where the stations are closer together," Justin Fornelli, chief of transit and rail at SanBAG. "It fits with the system and the service we're trying to provide."

They are looking at purchasing three vehicles to start with — two to run the service and one as a backup, Schindler said.

They are planning to go to bid for vehicles in February, with purchase in October 2016, she said.

In September, a program management consultant contract was awarded.

"Program managers oversee the multiple components of the project, ... bringing together design, operations, all the agreements we need and looking at how we implement rail regulations," she said.

In October, SanBAG expects to award contracts for final design and public outreach and branding services.

The working group, which met at the San Bernardino County Government Center on Tuesday, was formed by San Bernardino County Supervisor James Ramos and includes officials with the cities of Redlands and San Bernardino, Esri, the University of Redlands and other organizations.

Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-San Bernardino, who is the former mayor of Redlands and a member of the group, and Rep. Jeff Denham, R-Modesto, attended the meeting. Denham is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials.

The committee heard from several members of the public, many of whom were Redlands residents, including members of the Inland Empire Transit Alliance, Toll Free I.E. and the Redlands Tea Party Patriots.

San Bernardino County supervisor sends letter in support of drone bill

By Joe Nelson, *The Sun*

sbsun.com

San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Chairman James Ramos sent a letter Tuesday to Gov. Jerry Brown, urging him to sign into law proposed legislation to impose stiffer penalties on drone operators who obstruct firefighters and other emergency responders.

Senate Bill 168, authored by state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-El Dorado, passed the Legislature on Friday and is now on its way to the governor for consideration.

The proposed law would increase fines for drone operators who endanger lives and property during wildland fires and other emergencies by flying their drones in restricted airspace reserved for air tankers and other aircraft battling wildfires or responding to emergencies.

The law would also grant immunity to firefighters and other emergency responders who damage or destroy unmanned aerial aircraft during emergency operations.

"Presence of airborne drones endangers the life of pilots, emergency responders and citizens on the ground, and can lead to loss of life, property and valuable habitat if aerial operations are unnecessarily suspended," Ramos said in his letter, which he sent to Brown on behalf of the Board of Supervisors. "SB 168 will discourage the reckless behavior of individuals that endanger the lives and property of our residents and emergency personnel."

This year has proved the most problematic to date for firefighters and drones, which authorities said were directly responsible for the spreading of the North fire, a wildfire that jumped the 15 Freeway in the Cajon Pass in late July, prompting motorists to flee their vehicles and run for their lives as the flames destroyed 20 vehicles and damaged 10 others. Drones also hindered firefighting operations during the Mill 2 fire in Yucaipa, the Lake fire in the San Bernardino Mountains and the Sterling fire in the foothills east of Del Rosa Avenue in San Bernardino.

On July 28, the Board of Supervisors authorized an expenditure of \$75,000 to be used as reward money for anyone providing information leading to the arrest and conviction of the drone operators responsible for thwarting fire-suppression efforts on the North, Lake and Mill 2 fires. To date, the roughly 30 anonymous tips received via the We-Tip hotline on the illegal drone operators have not borne any fruit, according to the Sheriff's Department.

Ramos said he signed the letter prior to Tuesday's board meeting, and believes Gaines' legislation is the right tool to address the issue.

"I think it's the protection we need, not only here in San Bernardino County but across the state," Ramos said, adding that he has no problem with responsible commercial drone operators.

"I think there are those who are responsible and those who are irresponsible, and those who are irresponsible should face some repercussions, especially when they interfere with first

responders and the protection of personal property with the constituents of San Bernardino County," Ramos said.

Ontario councilman new policy adviser to San Bernardino County supervisor

By Joe Nelson , *The Sun*

sbsun.com

Ontario Councilman Alan Wapner, per an employment agreement approved by the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, will serve as Supervisor Curt Hagman's part-time policy adviser during Hagman's term in office.

Under the agreement, Wapner will be paid an annual salary of \$48,326. The contract may be terminated at any time by Hagman or Wapner, so long as Hagman or Wapner provide a 14-day written notice.

Hagman's district includes the unincorporated areas of Chino and Ontario, where Wapner has served as a Councilman for nearly 19 years.

"He brings a lot of history of the area," Hagman said Tuesday.

As a councilman, Wapner took an active role in projects including the Ontario Mills mall, the Ontario Convention Center, the new police station and the Citizens Business Bank Arena.

Hagman and Wapner both serve on the board of the Ontario International Airport Authority, but Hagman said activity at the Ontario airport will factor little, if any, into Wapner's job description.

Hagman said Wapner's role will mainly be to assist Hagman on special projects, including the expansion of two of his district's most underutilized assets: Prado Regional Park in Chino and Chino Airport.

Hagman said he would like to see more amenities at the regional park such as bike trails and RV campsites, and look into the possibility of concerts in the park or other activities that could generate more revenue. And he'd like to see increased use at the airport, which could come with increased amenities to help attract more users.

"That's one of the things I campaigned on — bringing in more economic activity to the area," Hagman said, adding that Wapner brings to the table both enthusiasm, attention to detail, and determination.

"He likes the challenge of new projects," Hagman said. "It's a start, and we'll see where it goes from here."



By Paola Baker
Staff Writer

September 16, 2015 9:51AM

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Earthquake hits Big Bear area

VICTORVILLE — An earthquake sent jolts through the Victor Valley Wednesday morning, the United States Geological Service reports.

The earthquake was first reported at 9:10 a.m. The earthquake's center was just 8 miles south of Big Bear Lake, with the magnitude measured at 4.5 and a depth of 7.1 miles, according to USGS.

The shaking was felt throughout San Bernardino and Riverside counties, with the strongest jolts hitting Big Bear City, Yucaipa and San Gorgonio. Jolts were felt as far as Los Angeles and Palm Springs, with the USGS reporting shakes with magnitudes up to 2.0 felt in locations 124 miles away from the earthquake's center.

Residents all over the Victor Valley reported feeling jolts when the earthquake hit.

No injuries or damages have yet been reported due to the earthquake.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20150916/NEWS/150919781>

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Power out at Ontario Airport, emergency generators being used

By Beatriz Valenzuela , San Bernardino Sun

sbsun.com

ONTARIO >> A blown power transformer may have led to a major power outage at Ontario International Airport Wednesday morning, officials said.

Initial reports indicate the power went out around 4 a.m., according to Southern California Edison officials. However airport authorities say the airport is still operational.

A blown SCE transformer caused the outage, said Sgt. Ron Pedregon, spokesman for the airport police department.

"Currently only Terminal 2 is being affected at this time, and we have emergency generators providing power to the airport," he said.

Airport officials said they are receiving conflicting reports of delayed and cancelled flights.

"Passengers are reporting on Twitter that there have been cancellations and delays but we're receiving information from our operation books and airlines that there aren't, so right now we're trying to get the correct information," said Maria Tesoro, spokeswoman for the airport.

She said she hoped to have updated information about any delays later this morning.

Reanna Marth was on her way home to Boston when her 6:15 a.m. flight was delayed by the outage, she said. She managed to change her flight and a little after 7 a.m. was hoping to soon be on her way.

Other passengers, though, took to Twitter and social media to say they were told their flights would be pushed back several hours.

"Power outage at Ontario International Airport!! No flights out until noon!" posted Christopher Rutt.

Crews are currently working on restoring power. It was unclear if the outage affected the area surrounding the airport.



WORLD LOGISTICS CENTER: Riverside County suing Moreno Valley over warehouse project

BY JEFF HORSEMAN

2015-09-15 16:29:33



Riverside County supervisors have voted to sue Moreno Valley over the World Logistics Center, saying plans for the massive warehouse complex do not adequately address traffic concerns.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously decided to move ahead with litigation during a closed session Tuesday, Sept. 15, the county announced in a news release. The county is open to delaying its lawsuit if Moreno Valley agrees to address traffic issues and environmental concerns, the release stated.

"The county reached out this afternoon to city officials, who declined the county's offer to postpone the filing if Moreno Valley would negotiate ways to mitigate the concerns," the release stated.

City officials and representatives of developer Highland Fairview could not immediately be reached for comment.

The city's approval last month of the 40 million square-foot project failed to address traffic and pollution worries, county officials contend.

"The county is particularly concerned about traffic impacts on Gilman Springs Road and State Route 60, concerns the county raised while in the project was still under review," the news release stated.

NO RIVERSIDE LAWSUIT

Meanwhile, Riverside City Council emerged from a Tuesday afternoon special closed-door meeting to announced they would not sue their neighboring city.

Riverside officials had raised concerns about traffic, air pollution and other issues they feared the logistics center would create.

Calling the move an "olive branch," Riverside City Manager John Russo said after the meeting that the city would work with other Inland communities and agencies to address deficiencies in roads and other infrastructure.

In August, council members authorized the city attorney to sue, but nothing was filed with the court.

"No one should interpret this vote as a vote of support for the project as it's currently constituted," Russo said, adding that council members are concerned about the traffic the center is projected to generate.

"This is not just about Moreno Valley and it's not just about the project," Russo said. "It's about looking at the future of the region and hoping we can discuss these things without going to the legal option."

The fact that other agencies and groups planned legal action also was a factor in the decision, he said.

OTHERS COULD SUE

The Moreno Valley City Council in August approved developer Iddo Benzeevi's plans for the center, a goods distribution hub that would cover more than 700 football fields and generate an estimated 68,721 daily truck trips. The 30-day deadline to file a lawsuit is Saturday, Sept. 26.

Logistics center supporters have said it will create an estimated 20,000 permanent jobs and some \$2.6 billion in annual payroll and contracts, plus wider economic benefits for the Inland region.

Benzeevi and Moreno Valley officials may also face a legal challenge from the Jurupa Valley-based Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice. Center Executive Director Penny Newman said Tuesday that her group is preparing a lawsuit and will file it by the deadline.

Newman called the project's environmental report "woefully deficient" and said truck traffic from the logistics center would be "pretty monumental in increasing pollution for communities that are already heavily impacted."

Contact the writer: 951-368-9547 or jhorseman@pe.com

PREVIOUS COVERAGE:

WORLD LOGISTICS CENTER: [Final vote filled with tension](#)

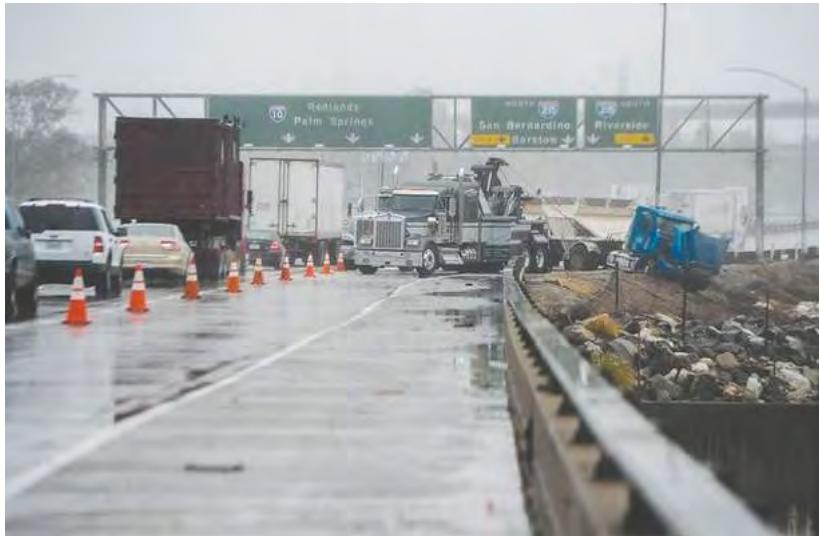
LOGISTICS: [Will warehouse make Moreno Valley the next Ontario or Mira Loma?](#)

Q&A: [Key things to know about the project](#)

Record rain in Southern California could be sign of what's to come

By Jim Steinberg, The Sun

sbsun.com



Francis Street sits underwater between Grove and Cucamonga avenues in Ontario on Tuesday. Jennifer Cappuccio Mahe — staff photographer

Tuesday was the second-wettest day in Los Angeles' history for the month of September, according to a Caltech climatologist.

The remnants of Hurricane Linda drenched the region Tuesday, dropping 3.5 inches in Sierra Madre and dousing Los Angeles. Both the hurricane and the strong drenching were part of the El Niño weather pattern and are "a harbinger of coming attractions," said Bill Patzert, an oceanographer and climate scientist at the California Institute of Technology.

Nevertheless, the dramatic rain was "not a drought-buster," Patzert said, as some 90 percent of the rain that falls on Los Angeles, ends up in the Pacific Ocean.

The "high frequency of hurricanes in the Eastern Pacific" is a result of the warming of the waters off the equatorial Pacific, which is what defines El Niño, according to Patzert.

If the water-filled clouds that were once a hurricane had not been offshore, then there would have been just slight cooling midweek, before going into the second of two hot weekends, Patzert said.

Separately, although related to El Niño, is the record-level warming of waters off the coast, said Ben Noll, an AccuWeather meteorologist.

Those temperatures are at the highest levels in recorded history — 65 years, Noll said. Temperatures have reached 75 degrees, about six degrees above normal, he said.

According to Patzert, that warming — meteorologists call it the Pacific Decadal Oscillation — likely allowed clouds from the former hurricane to draw more wetness and then a drop in

barometric pressure pulled them inland.

This PDO “is part of the larger stage that El Niños play in,” Patzert said. Where El Niños last between six and 18 months, PDO events last for decades.

The warm waters of the PDO, likely “enhanced the storm event (Tuesday),” Patzert said.

“It gave us 12 hours of amazing rainfall,” Patzert said.

The dream that El Niño will drop a huge snowpack on the Sierras this year “is not a guarantee,” Patzert said.

“El Niño is a marathon. It could hit the wall … flop,” he said, referring to the sudden exhaustion many marathoners experience in their 26.2-mile race.

Ideally, in the best possible El Niño scenario, cold air blasts from the Gulf of Alaska will coincide with the arrival of warm, wet clouds from the Pacific, with the result being huge mountain snowfalls, Patzert said.

The wettest day in September occurred in 1939, Noll said. Forty-five people died, primarily on ships caught off guard by the storm, he said.

In today’s dollars, the storm caused some \$26 million in damage, he said.



IMMIGRATION: Invest in real estate, get a green card

BY JEFF COLLINS AND ROXANA KOPETMAN

2015-09-15 15:00:33



Facing a deadline to get a green card or go home, Chinese immigrant Xiaoyu "Hugh" Hou narrowed his options to two: Marry an American or come up with \$500,000 to invest in a jobs project.

"I don't want to get married. It's not my lifestyle," said the 32-year-old tech entrepreneur, now living in Santa Monica. "I asked my mom for the money."

Five years after he lent mother's half-million to a San Bernardino redevelopment project, Hou got her money back, plus interest. And, he became a U.S. citizen.

There's a long line to enter "the golden door," as the gateway to America is known in a poem at the Statue of Liberty. But immigrants like Hou are finding a shortcut: investing in real estate.

Under a rapidly expanding program called EB-5, immigrants can get a green card for themselves and their families if they invest at least \$1 million and create 10 or more jobs. The minimum investment drops to \$500,000 if the project is in a rural area, or one with high unemployment.

Although the 25-year-old program got off to a slow start, EB-5 investment has exploded since the recession.

Between 2010 and 2014, EB-5 projects in San Bernardino and Riverside counties have generated investment of more than \$190 million and have created an average of 960 direct and indirect jobs annually.

700 percent jump

Nationally, EB-5 investment grew from \$321 million in 2008 to \$2.6 billion in 2014, according to Invest In the USA, an EB-5 trade group. That's a 700 percent jump.

This year's investment is on track to hit \$3.6 billion, the group says.

Businesses called "regional centers" – which can be privately or publicly owned – recruit investors from around the globe, pool their capital and funnel the money to various developments.

Typically, the return on such investments is small – 1 percent a year or less – since investors' main interest is getting a green card, not making money, observers said.

The U.S. State Department issued the maximum of 10,000 EB-5 visas for the first time in 2014, up from 800 in 2007.

Three key factors are driving that growth, experts say.

During the recession, bank loans dried up, forcing U.S. businesses to find alternative sources of financing. At the same time, foreign investor demand for EB-5 visas mushroomed due to China's economic boom and

Canada's decision to limit immigration.

"U.S. companies couldn't get financing," said Ronald Fieldstone, a Miami attorney who serves as counsel for EB-5 developers and foreign firms. "Then the program started catching on for various reasons, one of them being that you could get a source of capital at a reasonable rate."

The number of regional centers grew from 11 in 2007 to 697 as of August, government figures show.

Eighty-five percent of EB-5 visas last year went to immigrants from China, State Department figures show. Experts say they are seeking a better education for their children and the freedom to travel that comes with a U.S. passport.

Applicants from South Korea, Mexico, Taiwan and Vietnam accounted for an additional 6 percent.

A boon for real estate

The EB-5 law will go before Congress for reauthorization next month, and legislators are considering a number of reforms, including raising investment minimums.

Supporters say the EB-5 program is a huge boon to the U.S. economy. An Invest in the USA study released in May said it contributed \$3.6 billion to U.S. GDP in 2013, supporting over 41,000 jobs.

Investment in construction and real estate – mixed-use projects, hotels, hospitals, offices and massive housing projects – accounted for \$872 million of that economic impact, generating more jobs and capital than any other sector, the study said.

"The program is basically to create jobs and stimulate the economy," said David Hirson, an immigration attorney who has worked on EB-5 projects since the early 1990s.

"We're getting many projects and buildings that we would not otherwise have – be they stadiums, be they high-rises. And that stimulates the economy. Not only by the investments, but by (wealthy immigrants) coming to live here. And they continue to invest here."

Critics, however, say the EB-5 program allows immigrants to buy their way into America, circumventing the long waits other immigrants face.

"We shouldn't be selling visas to anyone. It's morally wrong. It's a highly inappropriate policy," said David North, a senior fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, a D.C.-based think tank that supports a lower level of immigration.

The program, some also complain, is fraught with fraud and abuse and doesn't benefit rural or high-unemployment areas as it is meant to. Critics, and even some EB-5 proponents, say U.S. census tracts are often linked in such a way that areas of low unemployment are gerrymandered to benefit the applicants, who then qualify for projects with investment minimums of \$500,000 rather than \$1 million.

More than 90 percent of the EB-5 visas issued nationwide are awarded for \$500,000 investments.

The investment nets the applicants green cards for themselves and also their immediate family members. Of the 10,000 investor visas issued last year, about 6,000 went to spouses and children.

Inland investment

Riverside and San Bernardino counties have been prime for EB-5 investment due to having high unemployment areas that qualify for the lower investment minimum, which is \$500,000.

The Norton Air Force Base project in San Bernardino is one of the most notable EB-5 projects in the Inland area.

Patrick Hogan, president of CMB Regional Centers, said EB-5 investments have helped build new roads into the military base and also asphalt covering to allow the storage of semi-trailers and school buses. The investments also helped build the two Amazon.com operations that Hogan said produced about 2,500 jobs.

"Many of our projects wouldn't have happened had it not been for EB-5 funding," said Hogan.

"We were able to help build the infrastructure to bring these companies to the Norton Air Force Base," he added.

Hogan said half of the projects at the former base wouldn't be there without EB-5.

In Riverside County, officials began heavily promoting EB-5 in 2009 with the creation of the Office of Foreign Trade.

In 2009, when traditional banks and sources of funding weren't lending, the county created the Office of Foreign Trade as it looked for alternate investment sources to help complete projects.

EB-5 provided that alternative.

Investment has been made in skilled nursing facilities, hotels, wineries, medical office buildings, shopping centers, and solar projects in Riverside County.

"We're looking to get into a more global competitive business model," said Heidi Marshall, Riverside County's commissioner of foreign trade.

'We're Americans'

An immigration attorney told Paul and Sharon Little it would take their family eight to 10 years to emigrate from England to the U.S., even though Sharon's father is a permanent U.S. resident.

The Littles had been visiting Sharon's father in Hemet annually since 1999, and they fell in love with the California lifestyle, the people, the weather. They wanted their daughters to grow up here, believing they'd have more opportunities in the U.S.

But after getting their lawyer's news, they gave up their dream of coming to America. Until 2007, when Sharon read about the EB-5 program on the Internet.

Within a year, Paul, 52, got a buyout from his job as an executive in the travel industry, providing cash for their investment. They put their house on the market and started researching places to invest.

"We wanted to make a good choice," Paul said. "There was no guarantee you get your money back."

They ended up investing \$500,000 in CMB's project in San Bernardino, which is building roads and bridges for a new development at the former Norton Air Force Base.

The Littles spent about \$50,000 more in legal fees and other costs. They had to provide documentation to the U.S. Embassy in London proving they had their vaccinations and were physically fit. Then they got their conditional green cards, good for two years.

On July 22, 2009, they moved to California, eventually settling down in Murrieta, where Paul opened an Irish pub called the Shamrock. The Littles' daughters, Nicole, 16, and Brooke, 13, went from a small Catholic school back home in Manchester, England, to a 1,500-student public school. "As a parent, it was scary," Paul said.

In 2011, the Littles got their permanent green cards. In 2014, they got their \$500,000 back, one year early. Last March, they became U.S. citizens.

"We're Americans," Paul said. "Full on."

'Brutally risky'

Hugh Hou, from China, first came to the U.S. after getting a student visa to attend a master's program in communications at Cornell University. After graduation, he got a six-month internship visa while employed at a Southern California branding firm, then renewed it for another six months. After that, there were no more renewals.

"I work here, my friends are here," Hou said. "I tried to find another route" to stay here.

That's when he learned about EB-5 visas. For the next six months, Hou became an EB-5 expert.

He spoke to regional centers, read financial statements, made sure each investment's risk was tolerable. Like

the Littles, Hou settled on CMB's Norton Air Force Base project.

Hou invested the money and got his green card. About a month ago, he got his mother's money back. He's keeping it in the U.S. for her. She plans to visit shortly and buy a rental house with the cash.

Hou said finding a good EB-5 investment isn't guaranteed. There are tons of brokers in China hawking U.S. investment programs, and he suspects some are scams.

Government figures show that an average of 274 EB-5 green card applications, or just over 15 percent, get denied each year.

A recent Government Accountability Office report found that government investigators identified at least 35 cases of securities fraud in the EB-5 program, noting that "immigrant investors may be vulnerable to fraud schemes because they may be primarily focused on obtaining their visas."

The report said the government is unable to adequately monitor the program.

Hou noted that it's virtually impossible to research EB-5 programs while in China, especially if you don't speak English.

"EB-5 is actually a brutally risky investment," Hou said. "Right now, if my friend said, 'I want to be in America, what can I do?' I would say, 'I'll introduce you to (an American) girl, and you should get married.'"

Staff writer Alejandra Molina contributed to this report.

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CORONA: 91 freeway at a crawl with 2 westbound lanes closed for repairs

BY ALEX GROVES

2015-09-16 05:17:00

Inland commuters planning on traveling on the 91 to get to Orange and Los Angeles counties on Wednesday may want to take a deep breath, listen to some music and get ready for a long commute -- a traffic jam is in their future.

A bad one.

Two lanes -- the No. 5 and 6 lanes -- are closed down near Green River Road in Corona [so that crews can conduct emergency road repair](#), said John Standiford, a spokesman for Riverside County Transportation Commission.

A California Highway Patrol officer said as many as three lanes were closed early this morning.

Traffic is moving extremely slowly on a miles-long stretch of the westbound freeway. A [Caltrans traffic map](#) shows that as of 7:50 a.m., the severe slowdown starts between the La Sierra Avenue and Pierce Street exits in Riverside.

According to one report from 6:30 a.m., it took a half-hour to get from the McKinley Street exit to the I-15 interchange, a distance of less than two miles.

Freeways that feed into the 91 are moving at a crawl, too. The Caltrans map shows the southbound 71 moving extremely slowly starting around Pine Avenue. Both directions of I-15 are jammed, as well.

Motorists who normally use that stretch of the 91 for their commute are being encouraged by Caltrans to consider alternative routes for getting to their destination, such as the Ortega Highway, the 60 and Interstate 10.

There was little respite off the freeway. In an attempt to bypass the traffic on the 91, many drivers attempted to take surface streets through Corona, backing up traffic through the city.

INLAND WEATHER: Showers possible during morning commute

The 91 carpool lane was blocked starting at 4:32 a.m. because of a nearby multi-car collision, but it was reopened about 5:10 a.m., according to a CHP incident report.

Repairs are being made to an 80- to 100-foot-long stretch of freeway near where the Green River Drive on-ramp joins the main line. Rainwater from Tuesday's storm pooled on the roadway, leading to concerns that it may have eroded the roadbed.

On Wednesday, crews will be ripping up concrete slabs to determine the damage.

Transportation officials hope the work will be finished by early Thursday, before the morning commute begins. But they'll know more after they get in to look at the problem.

Even on a normal day, that stretch of freeway is extremely busy during the morning commute as Inland residents head west. It carries about 280,000 vehicles a day.

The area also is undergoing construction to add three lanes between I-15 and the Orange County line as part of a \$1.4 billion project that started in July 2014 and expected to be complete sometime in 2017.

This is an ongoing report. Check back for updates.

Staff writer Ali Tadayon contributed to this report.

L.A. Now

California: This just in

First West Nile virus death reported in Los Angeles County

By **HAILEY BRANSON-POTTS**

SEPTEMBER 15, 2015, 4:03 PM

A San Gabriel Valley man who died this month was confirmed on Tuesday as the first West Nile virus death in Los Angeles County this year, county health officials said.

The man was hospitalized in late August and had pre-existing health conditions, according to the county Department of Public Health, which did not release the man's name or other identifying details.

There have been 18 confirmed cases of West Nile virus so far this year, officials said.

Also Tuesday, the city of Long Beach, which has its own health department, announced its first human West Nile virus infection. City officials did not disclose the person's name, age or condition.

Last year, there were 218 West Nile infections reported in Los Angeles County, the second-highest count since 2004, according to the county health department. Of those who showed symptoms and were reported to the county, 180 patients required hospitalization, and seven died, officials said.

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"Mosquitoes are the primary pathway to human infection with West Nile virus, and we are entering the period of increased transmission," Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, the county's interim health officer, said in a statement.

Health officials warned residents to take precautions against mosquitoes, including getting rid of pools of stagnant water, emptying and washing birdbaths and wading pools weekly, using insect repellent containing DEET when outdoors and making sure doors and windows have tight-fitting

screens to keep out mosquitoes.

Most people who become infected by West Nile virus, according to the health department, have mild symptoms – such as fever, headache, nausea or a mild skin rash -- or none at all. In 80% of cases, people infected with the virus never become sick, officials said. The elderly and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk.

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L.A. Now

California: This just in

Supervisors ask L.A. Times owner for local ownership

By **ABBY SEWELL**

SEPTEMBER 15, 2015, 5:11 PM

Los Angeles County supervisors have called on Chicago-based Tribune Publishing Co. to “restore local, established and invested leadership” at the [Los Angeles Times](#).

Led by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Michael D. Antonovich, the five-member board unanimously passed a resolution calling for the change.

The document echoed a [letter sent to Tribune leadership](#) last week by a group of local business and civic leaders – including philanthropist [Eli Broad](#) – protesting the firing of former Times Publisher [Austin Beutner](#).

A former investment banker who once served as a deputy mayor of Los Angeles, Beutner was hired to lead the Times in August 2014. He was fired last week and replaced by Timothy E. Ryan, until then publisher of the Baltimore Sun, also a Tribune paper.

“The appointment of a publisher transferred from outside of the Los Angeles area, and the continued practice of having key decisions made by a body located approximately 1,750 miles and two time zones away,” the resolution read, “is clearly not in the best interest of operating, growing and nurturing a local newspaper.”

Tribune officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Beutner’s firing appears to have stemmed, at least in part, from a dispute with Tribune Publishing leadership over whether The Times and its newly acquired sister paper, the San Diego Union-Tribune, should stay in the Tribune family.

In recent weeks, Broad made an overture to Tribune leadership to buy the Times and the San Diego Union-Tribune, which Beutner probably would have stayed on to run.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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BUSINESS

Big Retailers, Delivery Firms Face Struggle to Find Holiday Workers

E-Commerce Boom, Low Unemployment Expected to Force Increases in Starting Pay



UPS said during its most recent earnings call that it would better control holiday costs this year. *PHOTO: REUTERS*

By **LAURA STEVENS** and **LORETTA CHAO**

Updated Sept. 15, 2015 8:21 p.m. ET

For the past two years, Amazon.com Inc., Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Target Corp. and other big retailers have been flinging up warehouses and distribution centers across the country to get their online orders to customers faster.

In the coming holiday sales season, that building spree could come back to bite them—and the companies that deliver their packages.

With the nation's unemployment rate at a seven-year low as holiday hiring begins to pick up, some retailers and logistics contractors are already struggling to find enough seasonal workers to keep their new facilities humming. Soon, United Parcel Service Inc., FedEx Corp. and smaller regional delivery firms will be facing the same problem.

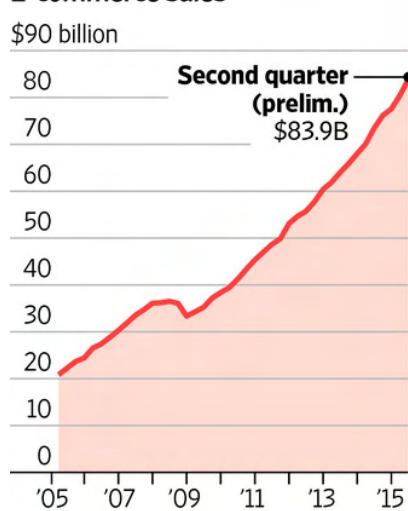
Employment agencies for retailers and logistics companies say they are having trouble finding warehouse workers to stock early holiday inventory and employees to train for work in fulfillment centers, where holiday orders will be packed and shipped.

Few could have predicted the nation's unemployment rate would fall to 5.1%, as it did last month, amid such red-hot growth in e-commerce. As a result, retailers and delivery companies expect to have to raise starting pay in some places.

Tracking the Warehouse Workforce

A rise in e-commerce sales has fueled an increase in warehouse and storage employees.

E-commerce sales



Warehousing, storage workers



Notes: Sales are seasonally adjusted; workers are production and nonsupervisory employees

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (sales); Labor Dept. (employees)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

For last-minute cybershoppers, the labor shortage may make the coming holiday season even riskier than the previous two, when Amazon and other retailers gummed up the works by trying to ship too many packages in the final days before Christmas.

"Last year was the first year that companies felt some challenge [finding workers], and this year they're feeling it even more," said Craig Rowley, leader of the retail

practice at Hay Group, a provider of human-resource services. "Between the low unemployment rate and, hopefully, a good Christmas, it's going to be tough."

The crunch has spurred some retailers to start holiday hiring earlier than usual. And they are trying to figure out how to be flexible enough to accommodate employees who can only work certain hours or shifts.

Starting warehouse wages, which have been stagnant for years, have been rising by about \$1.50 to \$3 an hour to attract workers in some markets, according to logistics staffing firm ProLogistix. The firm said that in this holiday season, temporary jobs—

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especially at e-commerce companies—start in a range of between about \$11 and \$13.50 an hour, up from between about \$9 and \$11, though it varies significantly by region.

Ozburn-Hessey Logistics LLC, a third-party logistics provider, is raising its hourly wages by about 10% in some markets to compete for talent in e-commerce hot spots, such as around Louisville, Ky., and Memphis, Tenn., where UPS and FedEx, respectively, operate some of their biggest package-sorting hubs.

OHL, which typically employs 8,000 in 130 warehouses, plans to increase its staffing by between 35% and 40% during the holidays.

“There are a lot of warehouses there, and the market’s saturated. In some areas, the unemployment rate is as low as 3% to 3.5%,” said David Hauptman, the company’s vice president of product marketing. “Many of the warehouses we’ve operated in, we’ve been in there for a while. It’s not like we’re new to the market. [But] Amazon and others have been coming in and putting wage pressure on us.”

UPS announced its seasonal hiring plans Tuesday, saying it intends to hire as many as 95,000 employees this year—the same number as last year.

“Make no mistake, we’re obviously feeling some of the crunch from those economic effects,” said Bryan McHugh, corporate director of the company’s human-resources operations. Mr. McHugh said he is confident UPS can hire all the seasonal workers it needs.

In some markets, that will mean paying more. The company’s base starting salary for package handlers is \$10.10 an hour.

UPS said during its most recent earnings call that it would better control holiday costs this year. Last year, it overran its holiday cost estimates by \$200 million. A labor shortage pushing up wage rates won’t make it any easier for the delivery giant, its rivals and its customers, all of whom are trying to keep costs down.

Amazon hasn’t disclosed its seasonal hiring plans. Last year, Amazon said it would hire

more than 80,000 people. FedEx increased its seasonal hiring last year by 25% to 50,000. It is expected to provide more guidance on its holiday plans during its earnings conference call Wednesday.

Many in the hiring game say the problem isn't just finding workers, but finding skilled workers. "It's hard to find people who can count, that have good math skills, that can communicate very well and follow direction," says Robert Tompkins, chief executive of a small logistics provider called Landis Logistics.

His company, which fulfills more than 600,000 orders annually from five warehouses with 40 employees in Reading, Pa., has been in need of two to three more full-time warehouse workers and about a dozen more seasonal warehouse workers to add holiday capacity for e-commerce clients. But, it hasn't been able to fill the full-time positions for 30 days, or more than double the time it took last year, despite rising salary offers.

E-commerce orders up the ante on hiring because it raises the difficulty for workers. "It's not just, throw something in a box—there's more to it," Mr. Tompkins said. "You've got to make sure it's packed accordingly, and make sure it gets to wherever it's going without having any damage. That does make it difficult to find people," he said.

He said Landis has raised pay by \$1 to \$2 an hour from its previous range of \$10 to \$15 and hour, and provides health and dental benefits.

As companies sweeten their offers, it has gotten harder to retain seasonal workers, especially in markets where multiple retailers and logistics companies compete for them, says Frank Layo, a retail strategist with Kurt Salmon. A growing number of his clients are having workers lured away by competitors offering a shorter commute or higher wages. That has forced those clients to raise wages or pay mileage bonuses.

"Early warning signs of people not being able to get enough labor are really starting to shine through," Mr. Layo said.

Write to Tess Stynes at tess.stynes@wsj.com